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SUBJECT: EGYPT AND AFRICA: BACKGROUND NOTES FOR U.S.-EGYPT
AFRICA BILATERALS, FEBRUARY 24

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[B](#). 05 STATE 1844

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Assistant Secretary Frazer, your bilateral discussions February 24 with Egyptian MFA Assistant Minister for African Affairs Mohamed Higazy in Washington will offer an excellent chance to determine how Egypt and the U.S. may be able to cooperate to address regional conflicts like Darfur and Ethiopia/Eritrea, as well as transnational issues like African peacekeeping, resource management, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Egypt and Africa

[1](#)2. (C) Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit has successfully broadened Cairo's traditionally Middle-East-focused foreign policy southward toward Africa over the past year and a half in office. Aboul Gheit's first foreign trip was to Sudan, followed by numerous visits elsewhere on the continent, particularly to neighboring Nile riparian capitals. Ambassador Higazy, a distinguished diplomat with intimate knowledge of the Nile Basin Initiative, has been directed to strengthen Egypt's cooperation not only within Africa, but with Washington and Europe on African issues. His companion on this visit, Ambassador Marzouk, was Egypt's Ambassador to Kampala before becoming the Director of Sudan Affairs, and knows the Sudan/Darfur file extremely well, despite the Foreign Ministry playing less of a strategic role there than Egypt's Ministry of General Intelligence.

Egypt and Regional Institutions

[1](#)3. (C) Egypt strongly desires a seat on any expanded UN Security Council, and has been working assiduously to position itself ahead of African power-rivals Nigeria and South Africa. The same competition extends to the African Union, where Egypt has recently increased its focus on debates over Darfur and peace-keeping issues. Egypt's assumption March 14 of the seat vacated by Libya on the AU's Peace and Security Council will provide Cairo with additional influence within the AU. Egypt is also active in planning for the creation of an African Standby Force, and will play a role in the G-8's Global Peace Operations Initiative. Last, Egypt plays a dominant role within the Nile Basin Initiative's group of 10 riparian states, and is leading efforts to reach agreement on a revised legal arrangement for Nile water usage. Ambassador Higazy will have just returned from a tour of Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi with his Foreign and Water Resources Ministers, where this issue was addressed at length.

Sudan and Darfur

[1](#)4. (C) Egypt strongly supports implementation of the north-south peace agreement (Comprehensive Peace Agreement - CPA) and is working within bilateral and multilateral channels to ensure the CPA remains on track. Egypt's primary motivation is maintenance of Sudan's territorial unity upon completion of the 6-year interim period addressed in the CPA.

In addition to providing the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) with 796 troops and 20 observers, Egypt is working to strengthen institutional capacities of the southern government through educational, agricultural, and other assistance. Egypt has opened a branch of the University of Alexandria in Juba, has offered numerous scholarships to southern Sudanese, is building roads, and is strongly encouraging its business community to assist in the south. The violent clash between Sudanese asylum-seekers and police December 30 in Cairo that resulted in 27 deaths has hurt the Egypt-Sudan relationship, but there appears to be no change in GOE policy toward Sudan.

[1](#)5. (C) On UN sanctions and an International Court of Justice (ICJ) war crimes tribunal for Sudan, Egypt has largely fronted for Khartoum in opposing more forceful action to bring senior GOS/Darfur figures to trial. While respectful of UNSC resolutions, Cairo is concerned about the sequencing

of such actions and their potential impact on political developments in the region. Egypt sees the West as siding entirely with the Darfur rebels, and believes this has slowed progress in Abuja talks and fueled expansion of conflict in Chad. The GOE supports in principle a transition of AMIS to a UN operation, as long as the AU's credibility is not damaged in the process. Egypt fears that a transition from AMIS to UN operations may complicate the Abuja political track, and put Egypt's 33 civilian monitors and 18 medical specialists at risk in Darfur. Ambassador Higazy will want to hear USG thinking on this issue, and USG comment on some press reports that Washington intends to insert U.S. forces in Darfur.

Other Regional Conflicts

16. (C) In addition to Darfur/Sudan, Egypt is closely watching events in Ethiopia/Eritrea, and has been actively counseling moderation to both parties. Egyptian and Ethiopian ties have improved tremendously in the past two years, although Egypt remains reluctant to side too openly with Addis. Egypt is also following developments in Somalia closely, and has recently hosted visits by senior Somali political figures. Cairo's main goal is to bring stability to conflict areas in Africa, and to that end has contributed troops in past years to multinational operations Liberia, Western Sahara, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, and Sudan.

What They Want From Us

17. (C) Last year, your predecessor visited Cairo for bilateral consultations and was asked by the GOE for assistance to Egypt's efforts to develop a regional training center for African peace keepers, greater cooperation and coordination in regional technical/science projects, and USG flexibility on a cotton trade regime (reftels). The Egyptians also solicited USG financial contributions to Egypt's Technical Fund for Cooperation in Africa. We expect they will repeat these requests. They will also press you for more formal and routinized bilateral consultations on Africa. We strongly support these exchanges and welcome you and your senior staff here in Cairo to explore African issues in greater detail.

18. (U) Khartoum minimize considered.

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